

[By Jane Lindholm](#)

(Host) Vermont's congressional delegation has been on the move lately, traveling to other parts of the world where America has interests.

They say their travel helps them craft foreign policy back in Washington.

VPR's Jane Lindholm has more.

(Lindholm) A group of Americans and others detained in Egypt have been allowed to leave that country. Egyptian authorities claim that the workers were illegally interfering in the country's affairs and had prevented them from traveling.

Senator Patrick Leahy was the leader behind newly enacted conditions on US military aid to Egypt. Speaking on Vermont Edition, Leahy said his bill was instrumental in ensuring the safe return of these workers.

(Leahy) "I think the Egyptians realize they made a mistake in holding these people. I'd like to see us get back to where, one, the military understand they've got to allow real democracy in Egypt. But secondly allow Egypt to regain its position as a moderating factor, potentially a moderating factor, within that region."

(Lindholm) That region is one where the Vermont delegation has been spending considerable time. Representative Peter Welch recently visited with government leaders in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. He spent much of his time abroad discussing growing tensions over Iran's nuclear program.

(Welch) "There is enormous apprehension in the region, not just in Israel, about a nuclearized

Iran. It would be very, very destabilizing."

(Lindholm) Welch says the leaders he talked with were supportive of sanctions against Iran but were very worried about any military action the US might take against Iran...

(Welch) "Because the countries in that region would be the first on the receiving end of any retaliatory strike. So it's a very difficult situation. My view: We want to maintain these sanctions. It's absolutely essential to the potential for success that we maintain unity. We have to have Arab League support; we have to have European support. And the notion of using force we have to approach with enormous caution."

(Lindholm) The Arab region is not the only part of the world Welch and Leahy have been focused on. Both returned last week from a trip to several countries, including Cuba, where Senator Leahy sat down with Cuban President Raul Castro to talk about the release of another American worker, named Alan Gross, detained in that country.

Leahy and Welch both believe some major changes need to happen in US-Cuban relations.

(Leahy) "I think the embargo is, if it had a usefulness at one point, it has long outlived its usefulness. Most countries look at us and wonder why a nation as powerful as the United States acts as though Cuba was a mortal enemy."

(Lindholm) Congressman Welch agrees.

(Welch) "It's an antiquated policy. The official desire of the American government is that the Cuban society should be more open. And I think many Cubans want it to be more open. Well, how in the world do we encourage a more open society by putting an embargo around the island? It makes no sense, even from the perspective of the objective of the United States."

(Lindholm) Both Leahy and Welch will be back in Vermont over the weekend visiting with

constituents.